

## Task Force on StLA data and Policy Questions Interim Report, May 24, 2000

### **I. Our Charge, Members, Schedule, and Process**

On March 25, 2000, the StLA Survey Steering Committee for the Survey of State Library Agencies agreed to form a task force to look at Question 33 and other StLA Survey questions relating to StLA focus on policy considerations relating to the work StLAs are doing, and policy considerations for,

- (1) education and education results
- (2) government effort to reduce the "digital divide"
- (3) costs of connectivity
- (4) growth of networks

**By late May or early June**, the task force is to make recommendations to Mr. Owings on questions 33 and 5 in the FY 2000 survey.

**By August 30**, the task force will prepare recommendations for discussion by the full Steering Committee. Following Steering Committee discussion of the Taskforce Report, the Steering Committee will decide on recommendations for data to be collected for public policy information needs in the 2001 and later surveys.

Members of the task force are Ms. Lynch, Mr. Shubert, Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Zimmerman. Federal participants are Ms. Davis, Ms. Kroe, Ms. Chute and Ms. Sywetz. Mr. Shubert and Ms. Davis are co-chairs of the Task Force.

### **II. Where Steering Committee Discussions of Data for Public Policy Are Now.**

In September 1997 the Steering Committee confirmed its interest in data relating to the areas of:

- StLA functions
- StLA governance
- Functions relating to Internet and Information
- Telecommunications/Accountability
- Funding
- Federal impact
- Duplication of services
- Changes in the way StLAs do business

The attached document, ***Facilitated discussion: Re-Casting of Policy Questions on StLA Survey/Steering Committee Meeting, September 22, 1999*** summarizes the 1999 review of the 1997 questions and groupings. The conclusion at the 1999 meeting was that policy questions would be further at future meetings. The formation of the task force in March 2000 provides an opportunity both to respond to Mr. Owings' concern for the 2000 survey and to address improvements in future surveys.

### **III. Question 33 Currently Provides Useful Data for Some Policy Questions**

Question 33 collects data on the amounts of total grant and contract expenditures by the StLA to assist public libraries in responding to a state education reform initiative or the National Education Goals in three areas:

- Readiness for school
- Adult literacy
- Lifelong learning

Data from question 33 appears in Table 28 in the StLA, Fiscal Year 1998 E.D. Tabs.

The question first appeared in the 1994 survey with only two areas -“readiness for school” and “adult literacy and lifelong learning.” This followed Steering Committee discussion in March 1993, which indicated the U.S. Department of Education’s strong “interest in information on state library agencies as they relate to Education Goals.” The Steering Committee advised that the question should be constructed to gather information in the context of state education goals as well as the National Goals. The Steering Committee also discussed education policy interests in subsequent meetings in connection with information needs for LSCA reauthorization. The three-part question appeared in the 1997 survey with emphasis on state reform initiatives.

In 1999 the Steering Committee raised the following as a policy question: ***What impact does or should an StLA have on education in a State?*** (This was the first of the seven questions listed under “[Functions Related to Education]”.) The following analysis provides breakout data on expenditures for “readiness for school” and “adult literacy” inasmuch as those data were collected for the entire five-year period.

#### **What do responses to question 33 tell us?**

If a State legislator or staff member, or a Congressional staff member goes to the StLA data for the 1994-1998 period, he or she would learn the following from data gathered in question 33.

- Over this period, anywhere from 26 to 30 states a year made grant or contract expenditures to public libraries to assist them in responding to a State or Federal education reform initiative.
- Conversely 13 states (Alabama, Alaska, DC, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming) did not report any grant and contract expenditures for education reform initiatives in the five years.
- In each of the five years, three or more states reported focussing exclusively on readiness programs. Nebraska, for instance, did so in four consecutive years; and Pennsylvania did so in three years
- The total of the grant and contract expenditures for education reform initiatives was approximately \$105.8 million over the five years.

Table 33 is not the only table useful to policy makers regarding education reform. By checking StLA expenditures for financial aid (excluding contracts) in table 25a, he or she would find that

- Over the same five-year period, the total expenditure for financial assistance (from all sources, state, federal, and other and federal) to public libraries and to public library systems was approximately \$1,883.7 million.

He or she might also go to table 13e and find that

- 38.4 professional staff in StLA Library Development offices consults on, or otherwise assist, children’s and young adult services in libraries.
- 14 StLAs have no professional staff allocated for children’s and young adult services
- 22 StLAs have less than 1 full time equivalent professional staff allocated for these services (some with as little as a 10<sup>th</sup> of a person’s staff time).

And she or he would see in table 6a that

- 41 StLAs support statewide summer reading programs in public libraries.
- 14 StLAs support summer reading programs in schools.
- 20 StLAs support summer reading programs in library systems.

These data are significant. However, changes in question 33 could make data more useful, as detailed in section IV.

#### **IV. Conclusions Following Analysis of Data in Part III**

Our first conclusion: Fiscal data are important for measuring response to education initiatives and for comparisons among the states.

Our second conclusion: The term “lifelong learning” is problematic for two reasons. First, it appears that some respondents believe that it overlaps the other two terms, particularly with “adult literacy.” Second, the term “lifelong learning” is insufficiently specific to obtain expenditure data that does not overlap with the “readiness” and “adult literacy” areas.

Our third conclusion: Some respondents are unclear as how to relate to “a state education reform initiative or the National Education Goals” inasmuch as reform goals of a state may differ from the National Goals established some years ago for year 2000. Education reform will be widely discussed during the 2000 election campaigns, and a new federal administration and governors will have their own goals for education reform.

Our fourth conclusion: It is inevitable that education reform initiatives will include concerns for learning before a child enters school and a concern for the persistent problems of adult illiteracy and the numbers of children who need to improve their reading.

Our fifth conclusion: We need to improve definitions for Question 33 as detailed in the following recommendations.

#### **V. Recommendations on Question 33 For the 2000 Survey**

(1) Re-state question 33 to read:

Enter total grants and contracts expenditures (from state, federal or other funds) by the StLA to assist public libraries in responding to assist public libraries in responding to goals in a state or federal education reform initiative in the following areas:

***Readiness for school***

***Adult literacy and family literacy***

(2) Revise definitions to read:

“Readiness for school” means pre-kindergarten learning that helps a child to enter kindergarten or first grade. Grants and contract purposes for “readiness for school” may include cooperative programs for children’s learning between or among public libraries and day care centers, schools, and other education and cultural organizations, including summer reading programs, toddler, programs, etc.

Adult literacy: Any library or cooperative program with other agencies or literacy organizations that help adults learn to develop or improve reading skills to function as learners, workers, consumers, and effective members of society.

Family literacy: Any library or cooperative program with other agencies or literacy organizations that provides integrated educational services for families, including adult education for parents to help them improve reading skills in conjunction with childhood education for their children.

NOTE: Report the total grant and contract expenditures for “adult literacy” and “family literacy” as one sum for “adult and family literacy”.

(3) The Steering Committee will continue its discussion and definition of public policy questions and modify or expand question 33 and its definition as needed to make the data more useful to public policy review.

## **VI. Recommendations on Question 5 (the detailed checklists of StLA services to the various types of libraries and systems) For the 2000 Survey**

Joe Shubert and Denise Davis suggest that the following questions be added as new question 34 rather than included with question 5 based upon conversations with Elaine Kroe on 5/24/00:

- | **Does your StLA attempt to monitor or track:**
  - | **local developments in interagency cooperation between libraries and other educational and cultural institutions? Yes / No.**
  - | **local progress on library partnerships with business/community organizations or other entities? Yes / No.**

Response to these questions will indicate for the researcher which StLAs are sources of information on such interagency initiatives. That information could be useful to state library staffs, government policy makers, public officials and library, museum and other cultural associations.

Library cooperation and collaboration is not limited to that with other educational and cultural institutions. There might be another question that gets to social agencies, daycare centers, universities, and community initiatives

The distinction made between “developments in interagency cooperation” and “progress on library partnerships with business” speaks to recognizing new initiatives versus ongoing partnerships. And, the distinction between initiatives directed at government agencies and the arts versus business and civic organizations.

## **VII. Steps that we will take to meet our August 30 deadline.**

### **(1) Digital Divide Questions**

We will develop at least two questions and definitions to determine the role of STLAs in addressing “digital divide” issues.

(a) One will relate to database development and database licensing – the access that children and schools may or may not have to information in licensed databases – generally along the lines suggested by Alan Zimmerman. The following is extracted from his May 11<sup>th</sup> message to the taskforce.

I don't know what kind of priority to give this question [What impact does or should a StLA have on education in the state?]. I would suggest we could move more in the direction of trying to identify and measure library agency activities that directly impact education. We ask for staffing for school library media center development, for

children's services, and for summer library program support. We should also ask technology-related questions. For example, we could expand the statewide database questions 26 and 27 to include education related activities such as:

Does your agency support statewide full text databases designed for use by young adults and children?

Then ask for measures of the database use utilizing counts suggested by Bertot - specifically database sessions, queries and searches, and items examined. For example:

Total number of sessions? Of this number, how many were for databases designed for school aged children?

Total number of queries and searches? Of this number, how many were for databases designed for school aged children?

Total number of items examined? Of this number, how many were for databases designed for school aged children?

If possible, amount of all database use coming from school addresses could also be requested. It may be desirable to ask for a count of school-aged children.

(b) **(TASKFORCE MEMBERS** – ALTHOUGH THE FULL STLA STEERING COMMITTEE HAD ENERGETIC DISCUSSION OF THE NECESSITY FOR QUESTIONS ON “DIGITAL DIVIDE”, IT APPEARS THAT TASKFORCE MEMBERS ARE SOMEWHAT DIVIDED ON THE MATTER. TWO QUESTIONS TO YOU FROM SHUBERT AND DAVIS:

(1) WHAT DOES THE “DIGITAL DIVIDE” MEAN TO YOU?

(2) WHAT OTHER “DIGITAL DIVIDE” QUESTIONS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

To be discussed in our August 30 report.

(2) Further Work on Question 33 For 2001 and Subsequent Surveys

Our proposed changes to question 33 for 2000 (in part V above) leave an interesting gap. The recommendations 1 and 2 that we made in part V above deal with StLA grant and contract expenditures to public libraries in behalf of preschool children (“readiness for school”) and generally in behalf of post-school adults and their families (“adult literacy and family literacy”).

We may need to collect information on grant and contract expenditures to assist public libraries in an initiative in behalf of school age kids (kindergarten to senior year or any part thereof) through school-public cooperation, after school homework centers, etc.

Another possibility would be to add a third or fourth category of “summer reading programs”. This would enable the user to know both how many state-sponsored summer reading programs and how much grant money the StLA put into statewide or area/local summer reading programs whether focused on a single theme or not.

Still another possibility: Perhaps a Yes/No question such as -

Do you make grants for education reform outside of “readiness for school” and “adult and family literacy”? Yes/No

If so, do you make grants to help libraries:

Serve Charter schools Yes/No

Serve Parents and children in Home Schooling Yes/No

**JOE SHUBERT AND DENISE DAVIS**  
**MAY 24, 2000**